



Writing a Counter Argument

Persuasive Writing

Whom would you listen to?

- A. Your friend who jumps to conclusions without hearing both sides of the story?
- B. Your friend who listens to both sides of the story and then makes a reasoned judgment?

Hopefully, you answered B.

- o Because that friend sounds much more reasonable.
- o When it comes to persuasive writing, one way to create a strong argument is to make yourself sound reasonable!
- o You can accomplish this partially through writing a counter argument.

What is a counter argument?

- o A counter argument is an acknowledgment of the opposing side of the argument.
- o Through it, you're addressing how someone with different views might respond to your argument.

Why you should use it

- o Good writers acknowledge that there are multiple points of view
- o It makes the argument stronger by giving you the chance to respond to your reader's objections before they have finished reading.
- o It also shows that you are a reasonable person who has considered both sides of the debate.

General Outline

1. Conceding statement and topic sentence.
2. First supporting detail.
 - A. Further explanation of supporting detail.
3. Second supporting detail.
 - A. Further explanation of supporting detail.
4. Shift back to your argument.

For Example...

- Let's say you're writing a persuasive essay on why students should **not** have to meet any academic requirements in order to participate in sports.
- Let's say this is your thesis statement:
Students should not have to meet academic requirements to participate in sports because their participation should be based solely on athletic merits.
- Now, let's look at an example of reasonable counterargument.

Step 1: Conceding statement and topic sentence.

- o Start this sentence with a conceding word or phrase that indicates that this is the opposing side: *admittedly, certainly*, or something similar.
- o Clearly and succinctly present the opposing argument.
- o For example:

Admittedly, there are legitimate reasons why academic standing should affect athletic eligibility.

Step 2: First supporting detail.

- o Provide a solid reason supporting your topic sentence. Strong counter arguments also give some further detail to really show understanding of opposing sides.
- o For example:

If students cannot manage classroom responsibility, it is unlikely that they will be able to manage athletic responsibility. Being part of a team requires the ability to show up on time, work with other people, and work hard consistently.

Step 3: Second supporting detail.

- o Use a transition, and give a second solid reason supporting your topic sentence. Again, give some further detail to really make yourself look reasonable and understanding!
- o For example:

Additionally, participation in extracurricular activities such as athletics should be a reward for respectable academic performance. Schoolwork is students' first priority, so it should be handled before they have opportunities to participate in other events.

Step 4: Shift back to your side.

- o Now that you've acknowledged the opposing side, transition back your initial argument. This should lead your reader or listener smoothly in to your support.
- o Start with a transitioning phrase such as *Despite this evidence...* or *Although these points are valid...*
- o For Example:

Although these reasons are valid, academic eligibility should not be affected by classroom performance.

Now, put it all together.

Admittedly, there are legitimate reasons why academic standing should affect athletic eligibility. If students cannot manage classroom responsibility, it is unlikely that they will be able to manage athletic responsibility. Being part of a team requires the ability to show up on time, work with other people, and work hard consistently. Additionally, participation in extracurricular activities such as athletics should be a reward for respectable academic performance. Schoolwork is students' first priority, so it should be handled before they have opportunities to participate in other events. Although these reasons are valid, academic eligibility should not be affected by classroom performance.

Now you try!

Choose a topic, and write a thesis statement. Then, based on that thesis statement, compose a practice counter argument.

- o Should teenagers be allowed to play violent video games?
- o Should schools change to 4-day weeks and 3-day weekends?
- o Is social media dangerous for today's children and teenagers?